

Chairman Connie Mack
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee
House Foreign Affairs Committee
“Merida Part Two: Insurgency and Terrorism in Mexico”
October 4, 2011

Two weeks ago four expert witnesses testified in this hearing room: two experts explained that an insurgency is raging along our southern border, the other two focused on the fact that violence and crime in Mexico has taken a unique turn and the U.S. response has not followed. All agreed that the situation has evolved and fragmented into violent criminal control over parts of Mexico.

It is clear that today Mexico represents a unique situation requiring the development of its own specific classification to successfully combat the authority of this expanding criminal control. Today I will continue to make the case that Mexico is facing a criminal insurgency.

The attacks on the state are clear, the criminal organizations are capturing the allegiance of the population through economic and social programs, and as they undermine institutions, they have no desire to replace them. This makes the insurgency in Mexico more of a threat to democratic governance than we have seen in other insurgency scenarios.

Furthermore, these transnational criminal organizations are employing increasingly gruesome terrorist tactics to carry out their threats. The potential threat of criminal organizations controlling our southern border creates grave national security and economic implications for the United States. That is why, in 2007, the United States began funding the Merida Initiative to improve the situation in Mexico. Unfortunately, we face more extreme threats and violence from our border region today than we did four years ago.

The Mérida Initiative has been successful in two areas: 1) establishing deeper cooperation between the United States and Mexico, and 2) removing major drug kingpins in accordance with the goals of the Mexican government.

Unfortunately, the game has changed.

The reality in Mexico is that U.S. assistance has lagged while the traditional cartels evolved into diversified, transnational criminal organizations perpetrating insurgent tactics to protect their assets. After four years of the Mérida Initiative, our border region with Mexico is more violent today than it was four years ago.

A reduction in violence, while maintaining a full attack on the criminal organizations and strengthening the institutions to prosecute and punish them, is required in order to regain control.

This is the basis of the counterinsurgency strategy that I outlined in the prior hearing: The United States should support a targeted yet comprehensive strategy that works with Mexico to secure one key population center at a time in order to build and support vital infrastructure and social development for lasting results. The counter insurgency measures must include:

1. An all U.S. agency plan, including the Treasury Department, Department of Justice, CIA, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of State, and others to aggressively attack and dismantle the criminal networks in the U.S. and Mexico.
2. Once and for all we must secure the border between the United States and Mexico by:
 - Doubling border patrol agents
 - Fully funding and delivering on the needed border protection equipment such as additional unmanned aerial vehicles and,
 - The completion of double layered security fencing in urban, hard to enforce areas of the border. And:
3. We must take key steps to ensure local populations support the government, and rule of law, over the cartels by promoting the culture of lawfulness.

As I stated before: The current U.S. policy with Mexico does not seriously address the national security challenge we face. It is time that we recognize the need for a counterinsurgency strategy that can combat the evolution and resilience of Mexico's transnational criminal organizations. This is a severe threat and requires a serious response.

I look forward to hearing from the experts from the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice represented by the DEA, and the State Department on how the situation on the ground has evolved, the impact on U.S. personnel and their activities, and tactical ways to quash this criminal insurgency.